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## STATIC AND DYNAMIC SOCIOLOGY.

THE above title is the subject of an important and timely paper, by Professor Lester F. Ward, in the last number of the *Political Science Quarterly*.<sup>1</sup> The discussion is not of merely technical or, as it may appear to many, pedantic interest. The lack of uniformity in the use of terms in treatment of societary phenomena is both product and propagator of confused ideas about facts and principles, from the most concrete and simple to the most complex. Agreement upon the questions involved will at once facilitate advance of knowledge about every department and phase of societary conditions. It is especially desirable that teachers of the social sciences should have definite notions of these rudimentary conceptions.

It is not my purpose to review Professor Ward's argument in detail. It deserves to be made the occasion for thorough reconsideration of all the questions which it raises, and for conclusions which will resolve much needless vagueness.<sup>2</sup> As will appear later, it seems to me that Professor Ward has correctly defined the territory of social statics and social dynamics, but I think his criteria of static and dynamic relations are not self-consistent, and furthermore I maintain that he has not indicated the proper method of employing these conceptions.

In general, the distinctions "static" and "dynamic" are logical, methodological and pedagogical. In other words they are primarily and chiefly subjective rather than objective. They are categories imposed upon the object by the mind which attempts

<sup>1</sup>*Polit. Sci. Quar.*, Vol. X., No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> At another time I shall explain the reference to statical sociology in SMALL and VINCENT'S *Introduction to the Study of Society*. I am not surprised that it is unintelligible, and in a subsequent edition it will be expanded so that the meaning will be evident. PROFESSOR WARD'S other reference to the use of terms in the same volume seems to me hypercritical, as the distinction is not necessarily desirable at the point referred to, although the authors admit the technical justice of the complaint.

to represent the object. They are aspects of the object, not independently existing objects. They are machinery for handling in details the things to be understood in their totality. This consideration will be further urged presently. In a portion of Professor Ward's argument he seems to neglect this fact, and to imply that there is an objective distinction between things as static or dynamic, whereas nobody understands more clearly than he that the distinction is between *relations* of things.<sup>1</sup> The question at issue is, then, What are the most convenient divisions into which to separate the subject matter of sociology? Professor Ward argues that they are "Statics" and "Dynamics." I am in perfect agreement with him about the desirability of these divisions, but I have found it serviceable to use the preliminary category, "Descriptive Sociology." This division is certainly not precisely coördinate with the divisions "Statical Sociology" and "Dynamic Sociology." There is a qualitative difference between the material held in suspension, so to speak, in descriptive sociology and the same material partially interpreted in statical or dynamic sociology. The tripartite division does not in any way affect the *definition* of statics or dynamics. It does most effectively guard against the illusion of which Comte was a notorious victim, that data may be interpreted before they are collected. Professor Ward would be among the last to indulge such an illusion. My difference with him at this point is therefore a matter of detail, of emphasis, of punctuation perhaps. I find however that it is extremely important, both in research and in teaching, to keep the observing and describing stage and process abruptly distinct in thought, and, especially with immature students, distinct in time from the interpreting stage and process, in which latter the categories static and dynamic have their place.

Professor Ward's position on the main question is as follows: "There is properly no division of descriptive sociology. That which might be so designated is only the work of the collector." As intimated above, I do not understand that this proposition

<sup>1</sup> This criticism applies to the attempt to make "feeling" and "function," respectively the criteria of "dynamic" and "static" facts. P. 206.

connotes anything from which I would dissent with respect to the necessary relation between descriptive data and sociological treatment of the data. The collected facts are equal in importance to Professor Ward and myself. I prefer to provide for a distinct division or department of the sociological process, that department, namely, which is devoted to the collection and description of facts, with such classification as is possible by the use of superficial traits. The material so arranged is then the lawful booty of interpretation—first static, then dynamic.

As already remarked, this is, of course, a methodological division, or distinction of process, not a division of subject-matter. The collected facts, to be interpreted in their static and dynamic relations, pertain to both past and present. Thinking now of the material of general sociology in the widest sense, the pertinent facts to be included in the category "descriptive sociology" will consist of all obtainable significant particulars about the phenomena which human associations present for interpretation. These phenomena are largely the subject-matter of special social sciences, and observations of these have been and perhaps always will be made chiefly by persons who do not proceed to the last syntheses of sociology. This fact does not constitute a reason why the initial processes, and the sciences to which they are immediately tributary, should not be grouped together for the purpose with which we are now concerned, under the general designation descriptive sociology. This grouping serves to make and keep clear the relation of these preliminary processes and results to the larger synthesis and interpretation which statical and dynamic sociology propose. I repeat, that agreement on this point need not affect the question in hand as to the relations of statical and dynamic sociology.

Professor Ward's views should be stated more fully before the argument goes farther. He continues :

Social dynamics (according to Comte) studies the laws of succession, while social statics seeks those of coexistence ; or the former furnishes the theory of progress, the latter of order. Again (pp. 207-8): All considerations of structure and function are *static*. . . . Merely *quanti-*

*tative* change is static. In *dynamic* phenomena the change is *qualitative*.<sup>1</sup>

Once more, (p. 210):

The antithesis between the static and the dynamic requires to be still more incisively drawn than has yet been done. Both growth and multiplication belong to the department of statics. . . . So long as the *type* remains the same, the phenomena, whatever they may be, are *static*; there is permanence and stability. . . . The counter law that antagonizes heredity and works instability is called *variation*. . . . Efforts bring about a more perfect adaptation through modifications in the type. . . . This is development. . . . It is a *dynamic* process.

Once more, (p. 218):

The test of a static phenomenon is that it shall relate to function. . . . So long as these various institutions, no matter how diverse in different nations and ages, are considered as they actually are, or as they were at a given time, and not as in a process of transformation, the limits of social statics are not transgressed. . . . In sharp contradistinction to all this, the test of a dynamic phenomenon is that it shall relate to feeling, and shall have to do with the direct effects of action in the effort to satisfy want.

Unless I completely fail to understand this exposition, there is here a criterion quite distinct from that just proposed, viz., the tendency to change type. This seems more evident in comparison with the following (p. 215):

A dynamic action is one that affects not merely the primary agent at the particular time, but all other agents for all time. Such actions

<sup>1</sup> The issue raised by the attempt to make *feeling* the principle of discrimination between static and dynamic relations cannot be discussed here. Professor Ward's thesis is: "The most fundamental antithesis in phenomena is between those of *feeling* on the one hand and *function* on the other . . . Everything connected with feeling is therefore primarily dynamic." My answer would be simply: Then *everything* social is primarily dynamic, since it has its roots at last in the *feelings* of the social units. My weariness when I go to bed at night (*feeling*), and my hunger when I rise in the morning (*feeling*), are more intimately connected with the static functions of restoring the bodily tissues than they can possibly be with any dynamic function, say of instigating a revolution in the interest of easier food supply for my descendants. Social reality in its every aspect is shot through and through with *feeling*. Whatever be the categories according to which we divide social phenomena, *feeling* of some sort will have to be recognized in each and all of them.

are sometimes called "fructifying causes." They are pregnant with future consequences. Static actions leave matters in the same state after as before their performance. Dynamic actions create a new state. . . . Charity work is chiefly static,<sup>1</sup> and supplies only temporary and ever-recurring wants. The highest philanthropy consists in such deeds as tend to diminish the number of indigent persons and thus to render charity unnecessary.

Professor Joseph Le Conte formulated the relations in question in the following language, which expresses in general the things upon which I think I am in agreement with Professor Ward. He said:

Society may be studied as a complex system of interrelated parts, acting and reacting on one another by mutual dependence and mutual help; perfectly adjusted to produce eternal peace, prosperity, social order, and good government. This is *social statics*, or we may study it in its onward movement, and the laws of that movement. From this point of view we perceive that the equilibrium is never perfect; peace, contentment and rest is never complete, nor ought to be; for society is ever struggling to reach a higher plane with wider outlook. The equilibrium is continually disturbed a little in order to be readjusted on a higher plane, with more complex interrelation of all its parts. This is social dynamics, social development, social progress. It is social evolution.<sup>2</sup>

With this explanation of Professor Ward's position, let us return to the previous question which he so summarily dismisses. My own work in studying and teaching societary relations was guided at the outset by Comte's classification. I soon found

<sup>1</sup> I cannot refrain from calling attention to this illustration of a fault of which few sociologists are free. I do not claim innocence when I testify against others. Here the term "static" which is under discussion as the sign of a scientific category, is suddenly transferred to service as an attributive of phenomena of social practice. The category "static" has been treated as consisting of "phenomena of function." The epithet "static" as applied to charity, means here "palliative," "pragmatic," "non-progressive," "dealing with symptoms not conditions." Obviously the concepts in the two cases are not identical. The one may include the other, but that does not justify the substitution of the one for the other in a close argument. Here is a case typical of numerous others, in which we need increased precision in the use of words. I am not taking exception to the proposition quoted, but simply to the terms in which it stated.

<sup>2</sup> *The Monist*, July 1895, p. 483.

however that it was necessary to distinguish as he did not, between the material of social philosophy and the processes of collecting it on the one hand, and the various stages of interpretation on the other. So important was this discrimination that it seemed to me expedient to call it by a distinguishing name. The conceptions of method which I adopted were accordingly the following: Starting with the presumption, first, that the sciences of man's environment are at our service; second, that the sciences dealing with man the individual are kept within call for the help which they must render in explaining the constitution of the social elements, we pass into the territory of the social sciences when we cease to contemplate man as an individual, related merely by the genetic bond to his immediate progenitors and descendants; and when we begin to study men in associations distinguished generically by the phenomena of active or passive agreement. In other words, there are phenomena subsequent to and arising from the characteristics of individual men, viz., the phenomena of the accommodation of volition to volition in every form of human contact. These phenomena are the proper subject matter of a societary science or of a family of sciences dealing with facts peculiar to societies. The enlarging consensus of scholars is tending to employ the name sociology as a general designation of societary science so defined.

The first step in the procedure of any species of societary science, *i. e.*, of sociology, in its most general form or in its particular divisions, must be an observing and a descriptive process, which we may treat as one. The appropriate description is always understood to be as really an integral portion of science as any subsequent process of discrimination, classification or interpretation. Thus in the article just quoted, Professor Le Conte says of the evolutionary hypothesis, after having shown that as a vague philosophic idea it is very old:

Again the scientific mind was awakened from its sense of security by the appearance in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This time, as we all know, the theory was almost immediately and universally accepted. The reason of this great difference in its reception now,

was (1) that now for the first time it came in the form of a true scientific theory, based on an *immense array of accurately observed facts* and cautious reasoning. Darwin was a perfect type of a cautious, inductive reasoner. *He had collected and observed facts* and pondered on them: he had organized and systematized his thoughts and verified his conclusions *for twenty years* in silence before he published.<sup>1</sup>

Nobody who has followed Professor Ward's writings will imagine that he needs to be taught the value of the collector's work. My contention as against him is rather an *ad hominem* argument. Himself being the judge, the work involved in precise description of fact is important enough to be separately designated. My impression is that in other inductive sciences the disposition to use some designation of this sort—descriptive astronomy, descriptive geology, descriptive botany, descriptive anatomy—has been strongest in the period during which there was the greatest conscious discrepancy between the amount of accurately observed material and the demands of the inductive method. It may be that there will come a time when sociology can dispense with this designation, as some of the other sciences have done. At present men old and young who are dealing with sociology are so unpracticed in the necessary methods, they are so prone to interpret when they have a right only to observe, and they are with such difficulty convinced that the basis of their alleged inductions is insufficient, that the maintenance for technical purposes of the logical division of descriptive sociology is dictated by prudence.

I urge this with the more insistence because it seems to me that even Professor Ward misrepresents the scientific situation. He says (p. 205): "Nearly all the scientific work thus far done in sociology has been in that (the statical) field." I reply that on the contrary it would be difficult to find a piece of thoroughly good inductive statical work upon any considerable section of societary material. There is philosophical speculation in abundance, and there is extremely fragmentary descriptive work, but I have tried in vain to think of a typical piece of statical work on



any comprehensive scale. The work thus far done is descriptive and that only. The loudest demand of sociology today is for the addition of description to description so that, with equally accurate observations of the various elements entering into social combinations, an intelligent view of their correlation is possible. I do not forget that there have been expositions of various political constitutions, at various periods; that there have been analyses of popular life in certain eras; that there have been accounts of the economic systems of various times and nations; of the ecclesiastical structure; of the controlling ideas, etc. Each of these sections of societary description has attempted to exhibit the relations of part to part within the particular division of phenomena described. In so far they have been essays in social statics, and inestimably valuable. As samples of statical explanations of the given society in its totality however they have fallen as far short of satisfying the demands of sociological method as a carpenter's account of the structure of a house would fail to fill out the concepts of physics, or as a sailor's account of Defender's last trial would be lacking as an exposition of the science of navigation.

Many men in various social sciences have done splendid work in the statics of their particular section of social reality, but as yet their contributions to general sociology should be rated rather as descriptions of elements than as properly statical results. We have as yet no single civilization so described that all its chief elements can be located. In no civilization can we demonstrate scientifically how the elements coexist and combine and coöperate, how they correct and complement and counterbalance each other. We are still in the describing stage. We no sooner get one element of the social combination, say the industrial, pretty well explained, so that we think we are ready to study its adjustments with the other elements, then we find that we have hardly studied these other elements at all, and our first observations under this latest impulse raise questions that demand more observation of the industrial element. We have done a lot of more or less brilliant guessing about statics and

dynamics, but the work which gives the most promise of being permanent is, from the sociologist's point of view, practically all descriptive. In the interest of careful, methodical, responsible science this condition ought to be advertised both to young students and to the oldest investigators. We shall lose nothing in the end by a frank showing of the situation.

This descriptive work being fundamental in all science, and especially since it is the order of the day, whether we will or no, in sociology, our designations ought to correspond with our processes. Tentative interpretation is always in order, but the heaviest constructive work in sociology for a long time to come must necessarily be in accumulation of material. Thus it is perfectly competent for sociologists, if they please, to devote themselves to description and corresponding arrangement of all the forms of human association discoverable in all lands, ages and nations, *e. g.*, the patriarchal groups, the hordes, the tribes, the nationalities, the federations; the arrangements of persons within nationalities, according to race or occupation; the different forms assumed in different times and nations by groups originating in the same principle of composition, as, for instance, the various forms of the legislative element in political groups; the varieties of religious hierarchies, of industrial orders, etc. It is possible of course to conduct such studies with constant reference of the particulars investigated to the containing whole, and thus to pursue the *form* of a statical inquiry. I contend that it is in the majority of cases an *empty* form, until description has gone farther than at present. In any event, the logical distinction between the preliminary descriptive work and the subsequent work of interpretation is at least as important in sociology as it has ever been in any stage of the development of another science, and it deserves prominence rather than concealment.

Passing now to more direct consideration of statics and dynamics, there should be no difficulty in agreeing that every fact with which sociology has to deal is static or dynamic or both, according to that consensus of definition in which Comte, Ward, and Le Conte join. It is by no means true, however, as

Professor Ward's argument assumes, that it is necessary or even possible to contemplate each societary fact, at every stage of treatment, as either static or dynamic. On the contrary, although men who habitually reflect cannot easily rid themselves of the anticipation that any fact which they may observe will presently manifest some static or dynamic relations, it is both necessary and desirable for students of society to deal primarily with facts as facts, before trying to make out their static or dynamic relations. For example, if one were to prepare himself for sociological interpretation of American society as a whole at this moment, he would be obliged in the first instance to investigate in turn the elements of which American society is composed, and the factors by which it is conditioned. Thus anthropological and psychological study of the population is to be taken for granted on the one hand, and on the other hand study of the natural resources of the territory, and of the actual use made of them by the population. Then the institutional phenomena would have to be considered in turn, the geographical and political distribution of the population, their individual and territorial division of labor; their contrivances for social control; their educational machinery, their industrial organization, and, finally, the body of traditions, beliefs, aims, that in conjunction with the material environment fix the limitations of national action.

It would be a long time before an investigator, even if he could divide this research among many assistants, could become so familiar with the details involved in these distinct divisions of material that he could safely venture to consider them as a totality in their static relations. During this period of preparatory research and reflection he has been dealing with innumerable facts which may have both static and dynamic relations, but he has had to study them by themselves, virtually regardless of their static or dynamic aspects, until he became sufficiently intelligent about them in detail to construct his knowledge of particulars into comprehension of the whole.

But Professor Ward will doubtless reply: "Each of these

institutions, or societary elements, is, itself, a static fact; it has a structure of its own, which is capable of statical formulation." The reply is obviously just, but it does not affect the case. The question in point is not whether a given social fact is a statical factor, or a product of statical factors, but whether in a given mental process it is contemplated in statical relations.

In other words, the distinction between static and dynamic phenomena upon which Professor Ward insists is one which I consider no less important than he, but I think he is wrong in assuming that social or other phenomena must always be represented in consciousness either as static or as dynamic.

Representing a fact as part of a static condition, or of a dynamic process is a procedure much more complex than mere perception of the fact; it is interpretation of the fact in relation to other facts. We neither do nor can nor should so summarily interpret all social facts that immediately following perception we refer them to the category "static" or "dynamic." On the contrary, we keep them for longer or shorter periods under observation, without necessarily committing ourselves to interpretation. During this time they are objectively either static or dynamic factors to be sure, but to our thought they are neither. There is then a raw material of social science, not yet worked into statical or dynamic interpretation; and I find no better term for the sociological process while the material is in this state than "descriptive sociology."

Thus thousands of phenomena occur daily in society which the people who observe them do not know how to explain. They do not know whether to interpret them as incidents in the natural order of society, or as impulses making a different order, or as accidental and exceptional happenings. The most astute social philosophers are frequently in similar doubt. These considerations do not tend to show that the distinction between static and dynamic facts is impractical or insignificant, but simply that the two categories are not sufficient to cover all our ways of contemplating facts. We actually use facts that at the moment are considered neither as static nor as dynamic.

To illustrate further, on a very minute scale, let us take the case of a bicycle club. It is a societary phenomenon of a comparatively recent origin. What place has it occupied in our thoughts? We have observed that it usually rallies about a headquarters; that it appears to have a more or less uniform affinity for wheels of a particular manufacture; that it manifests a somewhat unique *esprit de corps*; that its appearances in public are in varying degrees picturesque, and more of the same vague sort. Our observations so far can hardly claim to be a sufficient basis for final exposition, and I presume that Professor Ward himself would hardly care to distinguish them as properly statical. They are in a category antecedent to the statical. If we proceed to form an estimate of the societary significance of the bicycle club, we shall be obliged to collect precise and exhaustive observations for some time before we may safely venture to place the club either statically or dynamically. That is, we shall have the partial products of a scientific process, and these products, together with the process, deserve a distinguishing name, as much as the more finished products or processes.

I claim therefore that the term statical cannot be reserved for application to objects that are objectively statical, because the static or the dynamic quality is not an attribute of objects as such, it is an accident of their relations. These categories apply therefore to facts and processes *when considered in their static or dynamic correlations*. Otherwise we cannot account for inclusion of the same fact or object, in consecutive moments, first in the category static, second in the category dynamic. But our school system, for example, is at least presumed to be a factor of progress not less than a factor of order, and so in different ratios with many other institutions.

If Professor Ward does not grant that it is the point of view of the interpreter, rather than the objective character of the thing interpreted, which determines the designation of the process concerned, he will be led into all sorts of confusion. As just suggested, neither school, nor church, nor court, nor trade nor legis-

lature is sure to be at a given moment any more truly static than it is dynamic.

The most important difference between Professor Ward's view and my own in this connection is only hinted at in his paper. It is that I regard the discovery of the outline of an improved social order as the most important concern of the statical division of sociology, while Professor Ward has no toleration for that idea.

On this point three propositions will be at present sufficient: First, there are but two strata of statical condition which have any considerable interest in themselves for social beings. These are, in the first place, the actual order of the present time; and, in the second place, the future order about which everybody speculates as "the good time coming." Sociologists are as a rule interested in past status, not as archæologists, but as surveyors of preliminaries to social dynamics. The men who have made most strenuous attempts to formulate the social order of past civilizations have had in view the derivation of conclusions not merely about the statics of past times, but about dynamic principles effective in all times.

Second, the theory of a social order not yet realized is as properly *statical* as the theory of a past order. I am not now referring to the plans proposed for realizing the conception, but to the conception itself as a self-consistent arrangement of social elements. Thus the members of the assembly that drew up the Constitution of the United States were dealing with statical theory just as truly as are men who today lecture upon the theory of the Roman state, or the principles of the English constitution.

Third, provided that it is a construction of known facts and demonstrated principles, a doctrine of an unrealized statical condition may be just as scientific as a theory of an existing or a formerly existing condition. The theory of the Ferris wheel is no more and no less a statical theory, no more and no less scientific today than when it was merely on paper as plans and specifications of an unrealized ideal. It is as competent for the sociologist as for the engineer to discover and organize in idea unused possibilities of combination.

This is what I meant when I said "sociology is the science of social ideals."<sup>1</sup> The context makes it plain, of course, that the proposition referred to a second stage in sociological procedure, and was in no sense a proposed definition of sociology. I am free to confess, as admitted in the note at the beginning of this paper, that I am not now satisfied with my own statements in that connection. I am more secure of my ground, but see more clearly that I failed to define it. I not only believe with Professor Ward<sup>2</sup> that sociology should aim "at the organization of happiness," but I contend that scientific conceptions of what the conditions of happiness would be are necessarily involved in the pursuit of this aim. It seems to me very anomalous that a thinker who has been so bold and original and persistent in maintaining that the only conceivable end of life is happiness, should flinch from scientific criticism of the concept happiness, and from scientific calculation of the conditions of happiness.

My contention is that if we should make such advances in statical interpretation that we could accurately formulate the equilibrium of the societies which have transmitted civilization in every epoch from the beginning to the present, we should, in consequence, be in possession of means, first for generalizations of statical laws; second, for generalizations of certain dynamic laws, *i. e.*, of the derivation of status from status; and third, for positing certain approximate conditions of more complete happiness, or of more nearly stable social equilibrium. I contend, further, that a doctrine of the "organization of happiness" which does not posit some relatively definite conception of the social status toward which the application of the doctrine would tend, essentially resembles the other exhibitions of social hysterics by agitators who want "change" without a practical plan for a single concrete improvement. I therefore hold that it is the business of the sociologist, or of a division of the sociologists, to use descriptive material not merely as the zoölogist reconstructs extinct types from fragmentary remains, to represent the statical order of

<sup>1</sup> SMALL and VINCENT, *Introduction*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Dynamic Sociology*, passim.

past periods, but much more to show how discovered facts and forces and principles foreordain a more complete equilibrium of social elements, and to make definite exhibit of this indicated order.

It goes without saying, after what has preceded, that in the present state of our descriptive material, and of our static and dynamic interpretation, this latter task is to be treated for the present as a methodological desideratum, the satisfaction of which can be expected only in tentative and fragmentary form. Yet this part of our method seems to me so radically important that I have been misled into speaking of it as though it were the whole of "statical sociology." For want of a better term I have lately been designating this division of statical interpretation by the title "ideostatics."

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